

**STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**

1177 Alakea Street, Room B-100  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
Phone: (808) 586-8730 / Fax: (808) 586-8733  
doh.ola@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony COMMENTING on SCR 32/ SR26  
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S OFFICE OF LANGUAGE  
ACCESS TO ESTABLISH AN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER  
WORKFORCE WORKING GROUP TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN  
SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN THE STATE.**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
SENATOR HENRY J.C. AQUINO, VICE CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: 3/20/2023

Room Number: 225 & Videoconference

1 **Agency's Position:** The Office of Language Access (OLA) appreciates the intent of the Senate  
2 Concurrent Resolution 32/ Senate Resolution 26 and offers the following comments.

3 **Purpose and Justification:** These resolutions request OLA to establish an American Sign  
4 Language Interpreter Workforce Working Group to increase the number of American Sign  
5 Language (ASL) interpreters in the State and to submit an interim report of its findings and  
6 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty  
7 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2024 and a final report no later than twenty  
8 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2026.

9 OLA notes that the aspirational and exploratory goal of both resolutions are in line with the  
10 mission of OLA, which is to support the recruitment and retention of language interpreters and  
11 translators providing services to State and State-funded agencies. The establishment of a  
12 working group is an important step toward information-sharing and the development of ideas and  
13 action steps to address the language needs in our State.

14 While OLA has the subject matter and technical expertise in spoken language interpreters, OLA  
15 does not have the expertise in the area of ASL to chair this working group that would make it  
16 meaningful. OLA submits that another agency, specifically the Disability and Communication

1 Access Board (DCAB), is the more appropriate agency to lead this effort. Pursuant to the  
2 Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR) §11-218 - COMMUNICATION ACCESS FOR PERSONS  
3 WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, AND DEAF-BLIND, DCAB is charged with testing  
4 sign language interpreters and issuing the Hawaii State Sign Language Interpreter Credential  
5 (HSSLIC) to those who pass the test; posting a recommended fee schedule to guide State  
6 agencies; operating a continuing education program for sign language interpreters to maintain  
7 their HSSLIC; and providing technical assistance concerning ASL interpreting requirements and  
8 other communication access requirements under the ADA. Thus, the efforts of this proposed  
9 working group appear to be within the scope of DCAB's mission.

10 Nevertheless, OLA recognizes that these resolutions benefit more than the deaf and hard of  
11 hearing community as persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) may also include those  
12 individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and communicate using sign language interpreters.  
13 Therefore, OLA would like to remain a member of this working group and is committed to  
14 collaborating with DCAB and other members to further improve language access for all.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI  
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

**Date:** 03/20/2023

**Time:** 01:00 PM

**Location:** CR 225 & Videoconference

**Committee:** Senate Health and Human  
Services

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Resolution:** SCR 0032 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS TO ESTABLISH AN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER WORKFORCE WORKING GROUP TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN THE STATE.

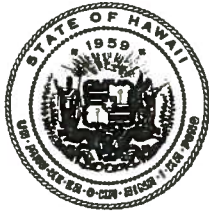
**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SCR 32, which requests the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH), Office of Language Access, to convene an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter Workforce Working Group for the purpose of promoting the increase of ASL interpreters in the State but defers to the DOH as to the implementation of this working group.

The Department has observed a decline in the number of ASL interpreters available for students requiring ASL to fully access instruction.

Should this measure move forward, the Department is committed to supporting the DOH in its implementation by serving on the ASL Interpreter Workforce Working Group.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • TTY (808) 586-8162 • Fax (808) 586-8129

March 20, 2023

### TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senate Concurrent Resolution 32/Senate Resolution 26 – Requesting the Department of Health's Office of Language Access to Establish an American Sign Language Interpreter Workforce Working Group to Increase the Number of American Sign Language Interpreters in the State

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports and offers comment on Senate Concurrent Resolution 32/Senate Resolution 26 – Requesting the Department of Health's Office of Language Access to Establish an American Sign Language Interpreter Workforce Working Group to Increase the Number of American Sign Language Interpreters in the State.

One function of DCAB is to establish administrative rules for the utilization of communication access services, including American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting, provided for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind in State programs and activities. DCAB's plan of action includes a goal in the area of Communication Access to increase the quantity and quality of communication access providers, including ASL interpreters, in the State of Hawaii. Pursuant to this goal, DCAB issues the Hawaii State Sign Language Interpreter Credential (HSSLIC) to interpreters who pass the Hawaii Quality Assurance System (HQAS) test or who possess a valid credential issued by an entity recognized by DCAB. DCAB proposes the following amended wording:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2023, the House of Representatives concurring, that the Department of Health's ~~Office of Language Access~~ **Disability and Communication Access Board** is requested to convene an American Sign Language Interpreter Workforce Working Group for the purpose of promoting the increase of American Sign Language interpreters in the State; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group's membership include the following members:

(1) A representative from the Department of Health ~~Office of Language Access~~ **Disability and Communication Access Board** who shall serve as chairperson of the working group;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW  
Executive Director

**SCR-32**

Submitted on: 3/17/2023 6:15:31 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2023 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Many ASL interpreters have moved to the mainland and so there is currently a shortage and a huge need. This measure will hopefully help.

# CARES

## COMMUNITY ADVOCACY RESEARCH EDUCATION SERVICES

---

SCR 32  
ASL  
Taskforce

to

Senate  
committee  
of HHS

The Hawaii  
State  
Legislature

from

Zhizi Xiong  
(Angela  
Melody  
Young)

Creator

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair & The Committee of HHS

CARES testifies in strong support.

ASL is not a building block for an language, it is a language itself; it is a visual language. There is a great need for ASL professionals to assist the blind & disabled community.

“The U.S. Department of Justice defines a qualified interpreter as “someone who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively (i.e., understanding what the person with the disability is saying) and expressively (i.e., having the skill needed to convey information back to that person) using any necessary specialized vocabulary.”<sup>4</sup>

An agency of the US DOE’s Office of Special Education Programs, the National Deaf Center on Post Secondary Outcomes, examines ASL interpreters and the need for it in a postsecondary environment. This data from this examination can also be applied to other settings beyond the postsecondary setting:

“Disability services professionals in postsecondary environments are sharing that the national shortage of ASL interpreters has been especially challenging. Colleges & universities across the country are facing increased difficulties providing support services to deaf students. This difficulty is a result of both a lack of availability of qualified interpreters and a decreased willingness of available interpreters to work in a postsecondary settings, particularly in person.

# CARES

---

Analysts suggest that the number of long covid cases, the availability of remote work, and general dissatisfaction with working conditions and compensation are contributing to a nationwide staffing shortage. We believe these current challenges are also contributing to the interpreter shortage. However, we also know that the need for interpreters who have specialized skill and knowledge has increased over the years as more and more deaf students pursue medical and technical fields.

Interpreters have told us that they are choosing not to continue working in postsecondary settings for following reasons:

- Poor compensation
- Inconsistent scheduling
- Working alone without a team
- Long commutes and difficult parking options
- Lack of technological support during remote interpreting work
- 

On the other hand, interpreters have also told us that they value the challenging nature of the work in postsecondary settings and playing a role in the educational journey of deaf students.

## Strategies to Recruit and Retain Interpreters

To combat the shortage, many DS professionals are sharing strategies to not only hire qualified interpreters and speech-to-text providers, but also to retain them. NDC has compiled a list of recommendations that may prove useful as you work through this shortage:

- Listen, validate, and support the interpreters and their work
- Use a combination of agency and hourly service providers
- Consider hiring staff interpreters and providing guaranteed hours
- Provide VRI services on demand
- Provide parking or transportation support for interpreters who come to campus
- Provide and pay for preparation time
- For lecture-based classes, consider teaming onsite interpreters and remote interpreters

# CARES

---

- Consider employing hourly student workers to help setup microphones and provide audio support to remote interpreters and speech-to-text providers
- Provide a dedicated office space for interpreters to take remote assignments between classes or before/after their time in on-campus classes
- Consider collaborative opportunities to share staff interpreting contracts with other institutions
- Offer free workshops with CEUs”<sup>3</sup>

“Speech-to-text is one method of providing effective communication access under the law. However, it is more than simply providing technology; it requires the provision of effective services, and speech-to-text services are only as good as the skills of the service provider. When hiring a service provider, a number of qualification factors must be considered. It is imperative that institutions evaluate the quality of service to ensure that effective, real-time communication access is occurring.”<sup>2</sup>

Disability access is mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It is imperative for the State of Hawaii to try to create more language accessibility for the disabled so that disabled people can have a fair chance at a normal life in society.

Blessings,



ANGELA MELODY YOUNG





# CARES

---

## Works Cited

1. CDC. "American Sign Language (ASL) | Parent's Guide to Hearing Loss | CDC." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 21 Nov. 2014, [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/parentsguide/building/asl.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/parentsguide/building/asl.html).
  2. "Hiring Qualified Speech-To-Text Providers." National Deaf Center, [nationaldeafcenter.org/resource-items/hiring-qualified-speech-text-providers/](http://nationaldeafcenter.org/resource-items/hiring-qualified-speech-text-providers/). Accessed 19 Mar. 2023.
  3. "The ASL Interpreter Shortage and Its Impact on Accessibility in College Settings." National Deaf Center, [nationaldeafcenter.org/news-items/the-asl-interpreter-shortage-and-its-impact-on-accessibility-in-college-settings](http://nationaldeafcenter.org/news-items/the-asl-interpreter-shortage-and-its-impact-on-accessibility-in-college-settings). Accessed 19 Mar. 2023.
  4. "Best Practices in Access: Hiring Qualified Interpreters." National Deaf Center, [nationaldeafcenter.org/resource-items/best-practices-access-hiring-qualified-interpreters/](http://nationaldeafcenter.org/resource-items/best-practices-access-hiring-qualified-interpreters/). Accessed 19 Mar. 2023.
- 